

Message Text

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13

ACTION SS-30

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /031 W

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R 121318Z FEB 74

FM AMEMBASSY JIDDA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6146

INFO USINT ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

USINT CAIRO

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

S E C R E T JIDDA 720

EXDIS

BEIRUT PASS DAMASCUS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, ENRG, SA

SUBJECT: SAG OFFICIALS' VIEWS ON RAISING THE OIL BOYCOTT

SUMMARY: DURING AMBASSADOR'S DISCUSSIONS IN RIYADH FEBRUARY 5-7, IT EVIDENT SAG WISHED TO LIFT OIL BOYCOTT AS SOON AS POSSIBLE; SAG UNWILLING TO ACT UNILATERALLY, HOWEVER, FOR FEAR OF FOREIGN CRITICISM AND BECAUSE -- AS MATTER OF

PRINCIPLE -- KING DID NOT WISH TO SEEM RESPONSIBLE FOR DISPLAY OF ARAB DISUNITY. SAUDIS WERE AWARE, HOWEVER, THAT CONTINUATION OF BOYCOTT COULD ONLY WEAKEN PRESIDENT NIXON AND CHECK OR TERMINATE US EFFORTS TOWARDS PEACE IN THE MIDDLE EAST. ON OTHER HAND, THEY BELIEVED -- BECAUSE OF STRONG INTERNAL PRESSURES OF PRESIDENT ASAD OF SYRIA -- THAT SARG WOULD NOT AGREE TO LIFTING BOYCOTT SO LONG AS BENEFITS HAD BEEN EXCLUSIVELY EGYPT'S. THEY ALL HOPE,
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RATHER FATALISTICALLY, THAT "SOMETHING WILL TURN UP" BEFORE FEBRUARY 14 CONFERENCE. IN MEANTIME THEY URGED USG NOT DO OR SAY ANYTHING THAT MIGHT PREJUDICE ITS CASE BEFORE ARAB PUBLIC OPINION. END SUMMARY

1. DURING AMBASSADOR AKINS' VISIT TO RIYADH FEBRUARY 5-7, HE DISCUSSED NEED FOR AN EARLY LIFTING OF ARAB OIL BOYCOTT WITH KING'S SPECIAL COUNSELOR PRINCE NAWWAF BIN ABD AL-AZIZ (KING'S BROTHER), MINISTER OF FINANCE PRINCE MUS'AD BIN ABDUL RAHMAN (UNCLE), DEPMINPET PRINCE SA'US BIN FAISAL, AND KING'S DEPUTY INTELLIGENCE ADVISOR PRINCE TURKI BIN FAISAL (SONS). IN EACH CASE, AMBASSADOR POINTED OUT US PUBLICLY COMMITTED TO WORKING FOR A JUST AND LASTING PEACE IN MIDDLE EAST, AND THAT EVENTS HAD SO FAR PROVEN SINCERITY OF OUR COMMITMENT. BOYCOTT MAY HAVE BEEN USEFUL AS A PRELIMINARY MEANS OF DRAWING ATTENTION TO ARABS' GRIEVANCES, BUT ITS CONTINUATION WOULD BE COUNTER PRODUCTIVE. IF BOYCOTT CONTINUED, MOREOVER, PUBLIC OPINION WOULD PREDICTABLY TURN AGAINST THE ARABS, AND PRESIDENT WOULD BE CRITICIZED FOR HAVING PREMATURELY DECLARED IN STATE OF THE UNION MESSAGE THAT A LIFTING OF BOYCOTT WAS IMMINENT. UNDER SUCH CIRCUMSTANCES, THERE WOULD BE LITTLE HOPE FOR A CONTINUED AND EFFECTIVE US PEACE INITIATIVE.

2. THE VIEWS OF THESE FOUR OFFICIALS HAD MUCH IN COMMON: THEY WERE ALL EMPHATIC IN AFFIRMING THEIR FEELINGS OF FRIENDSHIP FOR THE UNITED STATES AND THE NECESSITY FOR STRONG USG-SAG RELATIONS. PRINCE NAWWAF WAS CERTAIN THAT KING FAISAL WOULD TURN OIL BACK ON TOMORROW, IF IT WERE HIS DECISION TO MAKE; PRINCE MUS'AD SAID MUCH THE SAME, AND ADDED THAT HE HOPED THAT OVER LONG TERM, US COULD PLAY A PREPONDERANT ROLE IN PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION OF SAUDI ARABIA'S ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.

3. SAUDI ARABIA'S RELATIONS WITH ITS ARAB NEIGHBORS, HOWEVER, DID NOT PERMIT SAG TO ACT AS IT WOULD HAVE WISHED CONCERNING THE UNITED STATES. IF SAUDI ARABIA WERE TO LIFT BOYCOTT ON ITS OWN, BEFORE SUCH A MEASURE HAD RECEIVED ARAB APPROVAL AT TRIPOLI CONFERENCE, IT WOULD UNDOUBTEDLY COME UNDER ARAB ATTACK. THIS WOULD BE DISAGREEABLE. BUT SAG WAS MOVED BY POSITIVE CONSIDERATIONS ALSO: SAUDI ARABIA HAS
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LONG BEEN WORKING TO ACHIEVE GREATER SOLIDARITY BETWEEN THE ARAB STATES. IT WOULD NOT WANT TO BE RESPONSIBLE FOR CAUSING A DISPLAY OF ARAB DISUNITY.

4. SAUDIS AT SAME TIME UNCOMFORTABLY AWARE OF POLITICAL PRESSURES AT WORK ON BOTH PRESIDENT NIXON AND PRESIDENT AL-ASAD. THEY TEND TO ACCEPT WITHOUT TOO MUCH DISPUTE STATEMENT THAT IF BOYCOTT CONTINUES BEYOND FEBRUARY 14, USG CANNOT BE EXPECTED TO CONTINUE TO PLAY USEFUL ROLE IN SEARCH FOR A MIDDLE EAST PEACE. THEY RECOGNIZE ALSO CONTINUATION OF BOYCOTT WEAKENS PRESIDENT NIXON. THEY POINT OUT, HOWEVER, PRESIDENT AL-ASAD HAS HIS OWN ENEMIES AT HOME AND ABROAD, AND THAT IT WOULD BE POLITICALLY

DANGEROUS FOR HIM WERE HE TO ALLOW BOYCOTT TO BE LIFTED WITHOUT PROOF THAT SYRIA AND EGYPT WERE BENEFITING EQUALLY BY USG'S GOOD OFFICES. THEY FEAR THAT IF AL-ASAD FALLS, SYRIA WOULD BECOME A CENTER FOR SUBVERSIVE ACTIVITY AGAINST STATES ON ITS PERIPHERY.

5. FACED WITH THESE PRESSURES, SAG OFFICIALS ARE PRONE TO EXPRESSIONS OF HOPE THAT SOMETHING WILL TURN UP BEFORE FEBRUARY 14. THEY ASK THAT USG IN MEANTIME NOT DO OR SAY ANYTHING THAT MIGHT PREJUDICE ITS CASE BEFORE ARAB PUBLIC OPINION. SAUDIS ARE FRANKLY APPREHENSIVE TRIPOLI CONFERENCE MAY MAKE SOME SPECIFIC LINK BETWEEN DISENGAGEMENT IN GOLAN AND LIFTING OF BOYCOTT. AT THAT POINT, THEY SAY, CRIES OF BLACKMAIL WOULD BE HEARD EVEN MORE LOUDLY FROM US.

6. TO AMBASSADOR'S STATEMENT THAT BOYCOTT COULD ALWAYS BE IMPOSED IF SUFFICIENT PROGRESS NOT FORTHCOMING, PRINCE NAWWAF OBSERVED THAT SAUDI ARABIA DID NOT WANT OTHER ARABS TO GET THE NOTION THAT OIL COULD BE TURNED ON OR OFF TO PROMOTE WHATEVER HAPPENED TO BE THE ISSUE OF THE MOMENT.
AKINS

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 27 JUL 1999
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PETROLEUM, POLICIES, BOYCOTTS, PEACE PLANS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 12 FEB 1974
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: rowelle0
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974JIDDA00720
Document Source: ADS
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: 11652 GDS
Errors: n/a
Film Number: P740146-0040
From: JIDDA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19740268/abbrzavb.tel
Line Count: 132
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, TEXT ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION SS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: rowelle0
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 23 APR 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <23 APR 2002 by elyme>; APPROVED <27-Sep-2002 by rowelle0>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SAG OFFICIALS' VIEWS ON RAISING THE OIL BOYCOTT
TAGS: PFOR, ENRG, SA, XF
To: STATE INFO ALGIERS
BEIRUT
CAIRO
KHARTOUM
KUWAIT
TEHRAN
TRIPOLI

LONDON
PARIS

Type: TE

Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005